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SUBJECT: KOSOVO and ICTY: KOSTUNICA BRIEFS HIS PUBLIC

¶1. (U) SUMMARY: On July 3, Prime Minister Kostunica was interviewed by editors of four major Serbia news outlets (Vecernje Novosti, BETA, Danas, Standard) on national television (RTS) in which he explained his position on Kosovo and ICTY. Prime Minister Kostunica said categorically that he will never accept an independent Kosovo and reported that his recent engagement with Contact Group leaders Qhas shown results.Q Kostunica warned that an imposed solution in Kosovo Qcannot remain without consequencesQ and will be a threat to Serbian democracy. The Prime Minister also said his ICTY Qaction planQ will assure both the public and the international community that the GOS is committed to full compliance with the process. END SUMMARY.

KOSOVO

¶2. (U) The Prime Minister said that he is Qnot prepared and cannot acceptQ an independent Kosovo, and therefore Serbs Qcannot be preparedQ for that possibility. Calling an independent Kosovo Qcontrary to the basic principles of international law and democratic principles,Q Kostunica said that an imposed independence for Kosovo Qcannot remain without consequences,Q warning that he would Qnot be able to defend democracy in Serbia.Q Kostunica said that along with Kosovo, delays in European integration were weakening democratic forces.

¶3. (U) The Prime Minister told his people that he has Qraised by an octaveQ the GOSQs position on Kosovo including during talks with heads of Contact Group countries. Labeling the results of this diplomatic offensive as Qencouraging,Q the PM said this Qhas shown results,Q noting that none of the leaders had implied the solution for Kosovo is independence. (Note: Kostunica saw German Chancellor Merkel May 15, Russian President Putin June 12, UK PM Blair on June 27, and will see Italian Premier Prodi on July 5 before his meeting with the Secretary on July 11. End note.) In addition, Kostunica said that the QcampaignQ of private messages indicating independence for Kosovo had waned as there is a Qraised awarenessQ in Contact Group capitals and Brussels of BelgradeQs views. These Qsobering talks,Q the Prime Minister insisted, left him certain that negotiations would lead to a solution that is not reached hastily because QSerbia would reject [independence for Kosovo] and still consider Kosovo a part of its territory.

¶4. (U) The Prime Minister described the GOSQ negotiating platform for Kosovo (which the GOS released to the public in May 2006) as offering Albanians Qthe highest degree of autonomyQ while retaining issues of borders and foreign policy in Belgrade. He said that redrawing borders and creating an independent Kosovo is Qthe anti-European solution,Q adding that both he and Russian President Putin have warned on several occasions of the precedent independence for Kosovo would set.

ICTY

¶5. (U) Kostunica said he believes that the GOSQ Qaction planQ for cooperation with the Hague tribunal will eliminate "all misinformation" and convince the world of SerbiaQs commitment to its obligations. He said he is working to convince Serbs that Qcooperation with ICTY is necessary and that one man cannot be more important than all the others.Q Kostunica added that ICTYQs recent two-year sentence for Bosnia-Herzegovia war criminal Naser Oric was Qa direct mocking of justice.

¶6. (SBU) Comment: Kostunica used this national broadcast as an opportunity to raise expectations that Serbia will succeed in convincing the world to keep Kosovo in Serbia. This is part of the GoS' declared strategy to raise its argumentation on Kosovo "by an octave" in order to be better heard in world capitals.
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